

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on Nutrition and Physical Activity

Adopted December 7, 2005

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that children's health is essential to their success in school. Research studies over the past decade have consistently concluded that student health status and school achievement are directly connected and, in fact, that student health is one of the most significant influences on learning and achievement. Healthy eating and regular physical activity are essential components of a healthy lifestyle. Well-planned and effectively implemented nutrition and physical activity programs have been shown to enhance students' overall health, behavior and academic achievement.

The Connecticut State Board of Education is committed to promoting policies that support a learning environment conducive to healthy lifestyles. School districts must engage students, parents, school staff members and community members to develop, implement and monitor policies and practices to promote and support healthy eating and sufficient physical activity.

The Role of Schools

School policies and practices play a significant role in promoting a healthy environment. Schools must create an environment that gives students consistent, accurate health information and ample opportunity to use it. The classroom, cafeteria and school activities should provide clear and consistent messages that explain and reinforce healthy eating and physical activity. Students must be taught skills for making healthy lifestyle choices not only in the school building, but also in their daily activities outside of school. Local school boards must establish and enforce policies and procedures that:

- help schools promote good nutrition and regular physical activity;
- incorporate nutrition and physical activity goals into school improvement plans;
- require schools to allow time in the curriculum for nutrition education, physical education and physical activity, and to incorporate these concepts throughout all subjects;
- seek revenue sources that do not require raising funds by competing with nutritious school meals;
- make decisions regarding the sale and use of foods and beverages at school-sponsored activities (such as fundraisers, parties and sports events) based on healthy eating goals;
- promote positive local media coverage of schools' efforts to improve the overall health of students and their families; and
- support families' efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children by providing education, resources and activities that help with positive role modeling.

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The Role of Families

Good nutrition and physical activity practices begin at home. Family involvement is crucial. Families can help children develop healthy habits by providing healthy choices, talking about good nutrition, encouraging an interest in cooking, encouraging safe and positive physical activity, serving as positive role models, and participating in school health and nutrition programs. Schools must provide education and support so that families can:

- understand the importance of preparing nutritious meals and engaging in regular physical activity with their children;
- reinforce messages about the importance of proper nutrition and physical activity, and serve as role models for healthy living;
- advocate for a healthy and active school environment for their children, including providing healthy foods for school events;
- understand the goals of the school curriculum and encourage appropriate nutrition education and physical education; and
- understand the value of and encourage children's participation in quality school meal programs.

The Role of Students

Students have a responsibility for protecting their own health. Students must take advantage of opportunities to learn about nutrition and physical activity, and apply this knowledge by making healthy choices for themselves. Schools must support students by teaching and providing opportunities for students to:

- set personal goals for healthy eating and physical activity, and make healthy choices;
- actively engage in physical education and enjoy physical activity;
- advocate for nutrition education and physical activity options at school;
- take an active role in advocating for healthy food choices at school, not only in the cafeteria, but in vending machines, school stores and fundraising activities; and
- serve as role models for younger children.

The Role of Communities

Communities play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles by investing in the health, fitness, safety and well-being of children and their families. Community agencies can collaborate to provide integrated support services that build upon existing community resources and linkages with public schools. Schools must partner with communities to:

- work with families to support strategies that contribute to improved nutrition, increased physical activity and overall healthy lifestyles;
- provide and/or seek funds needed to support the school district's healthy lifestyles initiatives;
- develop and coordinate networks for communicating information and services that support nutrition and physical activity programs; and
- make facilities and programs available, accessible and affordable for the pursuit of individual as well as group physical activities and sports.